

Love Each Other



Lev Tolstoy

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I would like, before I go, (as in my age every meeting with people is a farewell) briefly tell you how, in my understanding, people should live, so that our life would not be an evil and grief as it seems to the most people now, but it would be what God wants and what we all want, that is a blessing and joy, which it should be.

It's all about how a person understands his life. If you understand it as life given to me in the body of mine, of John, Peter, Marie, and the whole purpose of life is to get as much as possible of any kind of enjoyments, pleasures, happiness to this "I", John, Peter, Marie, so the life will always be for everyone unhappy and hostile.

The life will be unhappy and hostile because everything you want for yourself another person wants. And since everyone wants the best of everything for yourself as much as possible and that "best" is the same for all these people, then this "best" is never enough for all. Therefore, if people live everyone for himself, they cannot avoid taking away from each other, fighting, getting mad at each other, and so their life cannot be happy. Even when at times people get what they want, then this is always not enough for them and they try to get more and more. Besides, they are afraid that what they've got can be taken away from them, and they are jealous of those who got something they don't have.

So if people perceive the meaning of their lives in serving each own body, then the lives of these people can't not to be unhappy. And that's what life is for all these people now. But life doesn't have to be this, i.e. unfortunate. Life is given to us as a blessing, and that's how we all understand it. But for life to be such, people need to understand that our real life is not in our body, but in that spirit which lives in our body, and our happiness is not to please and do what the body wants, but rather to do what that spirit wants which lives in us as well as in all people. This spirit wants to benefit itself, the spirit. And because this spirit is the same in all people, then it wants the blessings for all people. To wish the same benefits to all people means to love people. And no

one or nothing can prevent one from loving people; and the more a person loves the more free and happy his life becomes.

So it happens that, no matter how hard a man tries, he is unable to satisfy the body, because it is not always possible to obtain what the body needs, and if he decides to get it, then one has to compete with other people. But man can always satisfy the soul, because the soul needs only love and to love there's no need to fight anyone, but on the contrary, the more you love, the more you get drawn together with other people. So nothing can stand on the way of love, and the more a person loves, the happier and more joyful he becomes not only himself, but also he makes other people happier and more joyful.

So this is what, my dearest brothers, I wanted to tell you before I go, to tell you what all holy and wise people and Christ taught you, namely, that our life become unhappy because of ourselves. And that the force which sent us into this life and which we call God, sent us is not to suffer but to have the same blessing which we all desire. And that we don't get this, intended for us, blessing only if we perceive our life not as it should've been perceived, and if we don't do what we should've done.

When we complain about life, saying that our life is poorly designed, - we don't realize it's not that our life is badly designed but that we don't do what is needed. And it's just as if a drunkard began to complain that he became a drunkard because many restaurants and pubs are around, while these many restaurants and taverns are around just because many of drunkards like him have appeared.

The life is given to people as a blessing, if only they used it as they should have. If only people lived not in hate toward each other, but in love, the life would be perpetual blessing for all.

Now everybody, from all sides, says the same thing: "Our life," they say, "is foolish and unhappy because it's badly arranged, - let's re-do the bad arrangement to good, and our life will be good.

Dear brothers, do not believe this, don't believe that your life can be better or worse depending on this or that arrangement. Not to mention the fact that all

those people who care about the structure of a better life, - all disagree among themselves, all argue with each other: some offer one arrangement considering it the best, others say that this arrangement is the most evil and only that what they offer is good. And still third ones blame all that and offer their own best and so on. But even if such best structure existed, - even if we would come up with some best arrangement, how to make sure that people will follow this arrangement, how to keep this good arrangement when people used to and love to live badly? Because we are now got used to and love to live badly, so that whatever we touch we spoil, but we're saying that we will live good when the arrangement will be good. Then what is a point of a good arrangement when people are bad?

So if there is such best structure of life, then in order to achieve it, people need to become better. Instead, they promise you a good life after you, in addition to your bad life, will fight with people, rape people, even kill them, to establish that "good" structure; that is they promise you a good life after you will become even worse than you are now.

Do not believe, do not believe this, dear brothers! For our life to be good, there's only one remedy: for people themselves to be better. And when people become better, then the life will re-arrange itself into that what life must be among good people.

A long-time deception clouds people's minds – a false belief that a good arrangement can lead bad people to a good life (as if it'd be possible to make good bread out of rotten grains), and this deception has already done and continues to do a lot of harm to people. Initially, only rulers ran with this deception. They tried (or at least told so) and now trying through various forms of violence - removal of property, sentencing, executions – to make good and peaceful society out of unkind people. Now revolutionaries are trying to do the same. Dear brothers, don't fall for this deception. Let the rulers, kings, ministers, guards, officers do their evil works; but as you were clean from that, so try to stay clean. Likewise, try to stay away from any involvement in violence, to which revolutionaries call you.

The salvation of you and all people is not in sinful violent acts of re-

arrangement of life, but in an arrangement of your soul. Only by the arrangement of your soul, each person will gain for himself and for other people the greatest benefits and will make the best arrangement of life that people can only wish for. The true blessing is that which every human heart is searching, given to us is not in the future life arrangement maintained by violence, but now, given to all of us, everywhere, in every minute of life and even death, achieved through love.

This blessing is given to us from eternity; but people didn't understand it and didn't use it. Now time has come when we can't not to accept it any longer, as can't not to accept 1) because of the cruelties and sufferings of our lives have brought us to the point that our life becomes unbearably painful; 2) the true teachings of Christ, more and more revealing itself, now became so clear that we can't not to recognize and accept it for our salvation. Our salvation is now in one: in recognition that our true life is not in our body, but in the spirit of God who dwells in us, and, therefore, that all the efforts that we put earlier to improve our carnal life, private and public, we can and must put on that single, the only necessary and important for a human matter, - which for everyone is to raise and assert love in himself, not only toward those who love us, but, as Christ said, to all people, and especially to strangers and to people who hate us.

Right now our life is so far from this, so at first sight such change of all of our efforts, - from caring about worldly matters toward that invisible, unusual matter - for us to love all people - seems impossible.

But it only seems that way: love for all people, even for hating us, is much more natural to the human soul than fight with closed ones and hatred toward them. The change in understanding of the meaning of life not only isn't impossible nowadays, but, on the contrary, the continuation of that life in which all alienated against all, which we lead now, became impossible. Not only does this change isn't impossible, but, on the contrary, only it can get people out of those tragedies from which they suffer, and therefore this change is inevitably should happen sooner or later.

Dear brothers, why, for what do you torture yourself? Just understand that

you are given the greatest blessing, so take it. All is in you. It's so easy, so simple and so enjoyable. But, maybe, people who are suffering, the poor, the oppressed, will say: "Yes, it might be good for rich and powerful; it's easy for rich and powerful to love enemies, when their enemies are at their mercy. But it is difficult for us, suffering and oppressed". But this is not true. Dear brothers, to change your perception of life is equally necessary as for the powerful and rich, so as for the oppressed and poor. And it's even easier for the oppressed and poor than for the rich. The oppressed and poor need, without changing their status, not only not to do anything that contradicts the love, but also not to take part in such affairs as of violence, of police officers, of troops, - and all of this hostile to love arrangement will drop itself. But to the rich and powerful - it's much more difficult to accept and execute the teachings of love. In order to fulfill these requirements, they must abandon possessing them temptations of power, wealth; and it's harder for them; while for the poor and oppressed it's just enough to avoid new acts of violence and, most importantly, not to take part in the old ones.

As a person grows, so as the humanity. Consciousness of love grew, is growing in humanity and have grown up nowadays to the level that we can't not to see that it should save us and form the basis for our lives. After all, what is happening now – are just the last convulsions of a dying violent, vicious, unloving life.

Indeed, now it can't be unclear that all of these struggles, all the hatred, all these violent arrangements, defense of authorities, countries of different peoples, - all of these are pointless, not leading to anything except the increasing disasters, deceptions. And it can't be not clear that single and the most simple and easy recovery from all this is recognition of the chief Source of all people's life – love – that Source which inevitably, without any efforts, replaces the greatest evil with the greatest blessing.

There is a legend that the apostle John, when he reached deep old age, was absorbed by one feeling and expressed it with the same words, saying only: "Children, love each other." That's how his old age, that is the life of one man reaching its known limit, has expressed itself. Exactly the same the life of humanity, when it'll reach a certain limit, must express itself.

It's so simple, so clear: you live, that is you're born, you grow, get matured, get older and then you are about to die. Can the purpose of your life be in yourself? – Probably not. What then, a man asks himself, what am I? - And the answer is the following: "I am something that is loving" – but at first I seemed to love only myself, and after living a little longer and thinking a little more, I see no point in loving myself, passing through life, dying. Yet I feel that I must love and so I love myself. But when I love just myself, I can't help but feel that the subject is not worthy of my love; but I can't not to love. My life is in love. What's the solution? To love others, - family, friends, loving people. At first, it seems like this one meets the requirements of love, but all these people, 1) are imperfect, 2) they are changing and, mainly, are dying. So what should I love? And the answer is the only one: love everybody, love the Source of the love, love the love, love the God. Love is not for someone you love, not for yourself, but for the love itself. It is worth understanding, and immediately all evil gets destroyed from human life and the meaning of it becomes clear and joyful.

"Yes, it would be good. What can be better?" – tell people. – "It'd be good to love and to live for love, if everyone would live this way. But if I will live for love, will be giving everything to another, while others will live for themselves, for their own bodies - what will happen with me and not only with me, but with my family, with those whom I love and I can't not to love."

"Talks about love we hear from long ago, yet nobody follows them. And they are impossible to follow. Give my life for love would only be possible when all people, somehow miraculously at once, would change their lives from the worldly, physical to spiritual, godly life. But there are no miracles, and therefore these are just words and not practical". That's what people say, soothing themselves in their false life they got used to. They say this, but deep down they know they are wrong. They know that this reasoning is incorrect. It's wrong because for the benefit of the mundane carnal life all people need to change their lives all at once; but not for the spiritual life: not for love, for love toward God and people. Love gives such blessing to a person not in its consequences, but in the love itself, it gives him the blessing independently from what other people do, and from what takes place in the outside world. Love gives the blessing in the way that the loving person connects with God and not only wishes nothing for himself, but is willing to

give all he has and his life to others, and in this giving himself to God finds his blessing. And, therefore, what other people do, what is happening in the world, can't have an effect on his actions. To love means to surrender to God, to do what God wants. And because God is love, God wants to bless everyone, and therefore can't wish for a person performing His law to die.

Loving person, even being alone among the unloving, does not perish. And if they die among the people, as Christ died on the cross, then his death - both happy for him and meaningful for others, is not desperate or miserable, unlike the deaths of the worldly people.

So an excuse that I don't devote myself to love because not everybody will do the same and I will remain alone, - is wrong and is not good. This is the same as if a person who needs to work to feed himself and his children, would hesitate to work because others don't work.

Yes, dear brothers, let's focus our lives in strengthening love in ourselves and allow the world go as it will, i.e. as it is defined to it from the above. Let's do this, and believe me, that we will get the greatest blessing for ourselves, and we'll do to other people all the goodness which we only are able to accomplish.

It's so simple, so easy and so joyful. Everyone, just love, love not only the loving, but all people, especially those hating, as Christ taught, and the life will become an incessant joy, and all the problems – which the lost people are trying so vainly to resolve by the violence - not only get solved, but cease to exist. *"And we know that we have passed from death to life, if we love the brethren. Not loving brother does not have life eternal. Only loving his brother has eternal life, dwelling in him"*.

One more word, dear brothers. You can't know for certain whether a thing is good or bad if you didn't experience it in real life. If a farmer is told that it's good to sow rye by rows, or beekeeper - that it's good to build hives with frames, then a thoughtful farmer and a beekeeper, to know confidently whether that was truth what he was told, will make an experiment to check whether he should or should not follow what he was suggested, depending on

what confirmation he will find in his own experience.

It is the same in the business of life. In order to find out for certain how these teachings on love are applicable to the real life, give them a try.

Try this: for some period of time, decide in everything you do to follow the requirements of love: to live in a way so that in everything, first and foremost, you'd remember with any man, a thief, a drunkard, a rude manager or subordinates, not to retreat from love, that is, in dealing with that person, remember about what he needs, not about yourself. And having lived this way for a while, ask yourself: was it hard for you and whether you've spoiled or improved your life and, judging by what your experience will tell you, decide whether it was true that the fulfilling the love gives the life blessing, or that's just words. Experience it, try instead of repaying evil with evil to a bully, and instead of behind somebody's back condemning the human who lives wrongfully, etc., - instead, try to respond with good to evil, and to say nothing bad about a person, and to be not rough even with animals, a dog, but with kindness and with tenderness. And live that way a day, two or more (to gain an experience) and compare your mental state during this time with what you had before. Try it, and you'll see how instead of gloomy, angry and debilitating feelings you will feel bright, cheerful, and joyful. And live this way the second and the third week, and you'll see how sincere your joy will grow and grow, and this not only won't hurt your business, but it will improve it more and more.

Just try it, dear brothers, and you'll see that the practice of love is not just words – but the most natural and logical to everybody and important matter.